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Title: Issue regarding violating the Scheduled Tribes and other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act and PESA Act while implementing the Polavaram Project.

SHRI BHARTRUHARI MAHTAB (CUTTACK): Mr. Chairman, Sir, I thank you for allowing me to raise a very important matter of public importance. It relates to the tribal people and it relates to the Scheduled Areas.

Sir, Polavaram Project violates the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 and the Panchayat Extension to Scheduled Areas Act, 1996 as it does not have the approval of Gram Sabhas of hundreds of villages that would be submerged in Odisha, in Chhattisgarh and also in Andhra Pradesh if the project comes up. Why is the Union Government being a mute spectator when this project is affecting the tribals of three States? The project will wipe out many primitive tribal groups besides destroying the habitat of lakhs of tribals and forest resources.

The environment clearance given for the Polavaram Project is not valid as there have been fundamental changes in the design of the project. Even though the project is yet to come up fully, recently about 160 villages to be affected by it, particularly in Motu Tehsil of Malkangiri District of Odisha, were submerged by incessant rain and floods, the situation can well be imagined once the project comes up. Besides affecting more than 600 villages, the project will submerge 436-year old Shri Ram Temple at Badranchal. This proposed dam is likely to cause mass destruction, particularly in Malkangiri District. It is high time the Union Government and its Ministers dissociate from promoting this Polavaram Project which violates a number of Union Government Acts and trample upon the rights of tribals and forest dwellers.

So, I urge upon the Government not to proceed to declare this Polavaram Project as a national project and desist from violating the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act and PESA Act.